1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

142 Amerindian[1] average; the feet are set straight in walking, as befits the pedestrian habit; the arms are not elongated, and the thighs seem no [144] longer in proportion to other elements of the stature than are those of the highest human types. In like manner the bodies are notably free from artificial deformation; the skulls are not flattened or otherwise ●[304] distorted; there is no scarification, or even tattooing; neither ears nor lips are pierced for pendants or labrets; the teeth are not filed or drilled, though in some cases at least the first incisors of females are extracted; and while there are trustworthy records of the piercing of the nasal septum for the insertion of pendants, no examples were found at Costa Rica in 1894. The food habits and other customs of the tribe indicate, or at least suggest, more or less specialized and perhaps distinctive internal characters; but, without actual examination of the organs, these inferred characters demand little more than passing notice.

On reviewing the more prominent somatic characters of the Seri, it is found that the greater number are either functional or preeminently correlated with function, and that only a few—chiefly stature and color—are simply structural; accordingly a comparison of the peculiar somatic features and the peculiar individual habits of the tribe would seem to be instructive in more than ordinary degree.

361 The most striking trait of the Seri is the pedestrian habit. The warriors and women and children alike are habitual rovers; their jacales and even their largest rancherias are only temporary domiciles, evidently vacant oftener than occupied; the principal rancherias are separated by a hard day's journey or more; and none of the known [312] rancherias or jacales of more persistent use are nearer than 4 to 10 miles from the fresh water by which their occupants are supplied. Probably the most persistently occupied rancherias of the last half century have been those located from time to time near Costa Rica, yet even these were seldom occupied by the same group for more than a fortnight or possibly a month, and were often vacated within a day or two after erection. Still more temporary camps intervene between jacales, and their sites may be seen in numbers in the neighborhood of the better-beaten paths, or along the shores, or even over the trackless spall-strewn plains; they may be merely trampled spots, sparsely strewn with oyster shells and large bones gnawed at the ends, usually in the lee of a shrub or rock; in places of small shrubbery or exceptionally abundant grass there may be two or three or perhaps half a dozen "forms" (suggesting the temporary resting places of rabbits), in which robust bodies nestled and shrugged themselves into the warm earth and under the meager vegetation. Rarely there are ashes and cinders hard by, to mark the site of a tiny fire, and more frequently battered and stained or greasy bowlders record their own use as meat-

[1] The term *Amerind* (with the self-explanatory notations *Amerindian*, *Amerindic*, etc.) has been established by the Anthropological Society of Washington as a convenient collective designation for the aboriginal American tribes (American Anthropologist, new series, vol. 1, 1899, p. 562).

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

blood counts as nothing in the establishment and maintenance of the clan organization. Thus the females alone are the blood-carriers of the clans; they alone require ready and certain identification in order that their institutional theory and practice may be maintained; and hence they alone need to become bearers of the sacred blood-standards. The warriors belong to the tribe, and are distinguished by luxuriantly flowing hair, by the up-stepping movement from which the people derive their appellation, by their unique archery attitude, and by their dark skin-color; the boys count for little until they enter the warrior class; but on the females devolves the duty of defining and maintaining the several streams of blood on which the rigidly guarded tribal integrity depends.[1] Undoubtedly the blood-markings play an important rôle in courtship and marriage, but too little is known of the esoteric life of the tribe to permit this rôle to be traced.

In brief, the Seri face-painting would seem to be essentially *emblematic*, or symbolic of zoic tutelaries, and to signify subspecific (or subvarietal) characteristics maintained by the clan organization and kept prominent by the militant habit of the tribe; at the same time it is noteworthy that the purely symbolic motive is accompanied by a nascent decorative tendency, displayed by the individual refinement of form and color in the symbol proper to each of the groups.

DECORATION IN GENERAL

Aside from the face-painting there is a conspicuous dearth of decoration or tangible symbolism among the Seri.

The symbolic or decorative modification of the physique would seem to be limited to two classes of mutilations, of which one was observed at Costa Rica in 1894 while the other is apparently obsolete. The observed corporeal modification is the absence of medial superior incisors of the females, in consequence of forcible removal at a period not definitely ascertained. The interpreter at Costa Rica was uncommunicative on the subject; Don Pascual opined that the mutilation formed part of an elaborate puberty ceremonial, and this opinion would seem to be corroborated by the condition of the cranium of an immature female examined by Dr Hrdlička; but since the half-dozen adult maidens at the rancho in 1894 were free from the mutilation while all the wives bore its gruesome trace, it would seem more probable that the custom is connected with marriage. Whatever the period of the infliction, Mashém's guarded expressions seemed to indicate that it was a mark of physical inferiority; and this suggestion, interpreted in the light of the Seri use of teeth as weapons of offense and defense, would seem to indicate that the mutilation is at once the badge of corporeal inferiority and a means of maintaining the physical superiority of the males—of course in that theoretically fiducial but actually forceful way characteristic of primitive culture.

[1] The essentially sacerdotal nature of Seri law and custom is set forth *postea*, p. 204.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

301 The second mutilation was the only corporeal modification noted by early missionaries and explorers—it was the perforation of the nasal [304] septum for the insertion of a skewer, perhaps of polished stone (though doubtless more commonly of bone), to which swinging objects were attached. One of the most useful records is that of the Jesuit, Padre [114] Joseph Och, who described the nasal attachment as a small, colored stone suspended by cords from the perforated septum, and guarded with such jealous veneration that "one must give them at least a horse or a cow for one" (ante, p. 78); while according to Hardy's record, the nasal fetish is "a small, round, white bone, 5 inches in length, tapering off at both ends, and rigged something like a cross-jack yard."[1]

[237] [291]

FIG. 7.—Snake-skin belt.

The custom is apparently obsolete, and nothing is known directly of details or motives.

Excepting these mutilations the corporeal decoration of the Seri is 301 apparently limited to the face-painting: among the 60 individuals at 304 Costa Rica in 1894 there was no trace of tattooing or scarification of face, limbs, or body; there were no labrets or earrings, and neither lips nor ears were pierced, nor were nasal septa observed to be perforated in accordance with the reputed ancient custom; the teeth were neither filed nor drilled; no indications of amputation or other maiming (save the removal of the incisors) were observed—indeed, the instinct for physical markings of symbolic or decorative character, which seems to be normal to primitive men, was apparently satisfied by the prevalent and persistent face-painting among the females.

291 The extra-corporeal decorative devices are of a meagerness and pov-

[1] Travels, p. 286.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

114 583 As to the "total absence" (p. 285) of marriage purchase, whereas I found it, such purchase can hardly be believed to have originated wholly within the last 35 years, in view of its wide distribution in native America.

114 614 The whole matter of maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule (pp. 10-11, 167-8, 269 seq.) seems a fantasy. A careful reading of the passages in questions reveals how much McGee has built up on statements which he conscientiously admits to have been slender, probable only, and subject to possible misunderstanding. It must be remembered that in 1894 the matriarchate as original and primitive was still standard anthropological doctrine. At any rate, I got nothing suggesting even matrilineal reckoning in my indirect approaches to the subject, and explicit denials when it was directly presented.

114 342 That house-building may now and then be "accompanied by a chant" (p. 223) is possible, though it seems out of accord with the haphazard and shiftless methods of Seri work and the flimsy irregularity of their homes; but that the chant was "usually led by the eldest matron" seems more matriarchate.

114 174 That the Upanguaymá, Guayma, and Tepoka were successively "extruded" (p. 75) would be correct if there were anything to show that the Seri were the parent stock of superior virtue, conservatism, and faithful attachment to their original habitat.

114 601 The statement (p. 11) that "kinship terms are strikingly scanty," made in the face of round-about and imperfect speech communications with the Seri, I cite only as an indication of the degree of McGee's readiness to fall back upon his preconceptions when facts became thin.

114 304 I did not note the absence of superior medial incisor teeth observed by McGee (p. 169) in married women. If a regular practise, its connection with the puberty rite would be a natural inference. But knocking out of teeth is a rare custom in America.

114 224 McGee's statements (pp. 196-7) that it is "undignified, if not wrong" to kill deer other than with the hands, and that jackrabbits are "customarily taken alive to camp," seem over-emphases. That a sense of sport or passing pride, or lack of weapons, now and then leads to such happenings, I do not doubt; but the Seri seem too practical and unromantic to exact rules on the point. I suspect that a youth who insisted on living up to them would soon be considered a vain bore. I may add that I saw a crippled wild duck hobble about the camp on Tiburon for two days, being played with occasionally by the children—without unusual roughness or unkindliness—and that finally it wandered to the water and gradually drifted off without notice being taken.

114 302 614 Face painting is construed by McGee as sematic of totemic line-

261 will exist on very small rations, bear burdens, and walk long dis-
262 tances. Their food is anything that walks, flies, crawls or swims,
[252] and they eat it raw with the same relish that we eat it cooked. There is but one thing they will not eat; they draw the line on the Gila monster. They are the most perfect type of human being adapted to desert conditions that exists today. Convey them blindfolded many miles into the heart of the desert, empty-handed, remove their blinders, and they will find both food and water where others would perish. The Papagos and Yaquis do almost as well."

302 We gave the women a small bag of flour and three or four cubes of
[123] sugar around, and the men three packets of tobacco each and two boxes of matches. Matches with them are very precious and are rarely used. Rather than use a match a woman came over to our fire and borrowed some coals to rebuild her fire. From this point the nearest matches are a good deal over one hundred and twenty miles distant, so they have to economize in every thing.

422 Each rag is valuable, and flour, sugar, coffee and rifle shells
[436] are absolutely priceless. While they know money, it has no value here.
[437] Only commodities go here. The most highly prized things are boards to
[389] make boats and rifle shells to get game and protect themselves. All empty shells are saved, the primer punched out, straightened, a match head put in, a little pinch of powder on top, the shell filled up, a long bullet inserted, the shell pinched tight, and a fresh set of ammunition is made.

142 The women and children certainly did look wild. Their hair was
291 frowsy and unkempt, their skirts and waists a patchwork of dirty rags
302 coming just below the knees; their features seamed and hard and cruel. Their complexion was very dark. They had no under garments. The children wore only a dirty shirt coming a little below their thighs, and even that is ragged. One or two of the women had a dirty bandanna over their heads. How I wished I could have seen them in their ancient, picturesque pelican-skin kilts!

302 I happened to witness the operation of a Seri beauty parlor. A
[924] mother brushed the hair of her thirteen-year-old daughter with a brush
[293] made from the fibrous roots of a certain grass tied together with
[515] sinew. During the operation if she came across a *piojo*, and she found several, she plucked him away from his feeding ground and dropped him in the fire.

The hair neatly brushed, the mother then mixed paint in a small vessel and with a tiny stick painted a bright blue design under the eyes and across the cheeks and nose, and then she added narrow white stripes, which, contrasting with the blue and the dark skin, produced a very striking effect. This paint is easily removed and the women often paint and remove three different face designs in one day.

• 304 I did not see tattoo work on either men or women, nor did they
301 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians.